AIR SUPPORT

by Rich Carr

Air support is dedicated to my wife, Kathleen, whose patience and support made this game possible.

synapse

LOADING INSTRUCTIONS FOR BOTH THE ATARI AND COMMODORE C-64 COMPUTERS.

FOR COMMODORE 64
Loading Disk

Insert disk into the drive. Be certain both the drive and the computer are powered up — when the monitor screen is lit, type LOAD, press the space bar, then type "*",8, 1 then press return.

Loading Cassette

Place cassette in player. Press play button. Hold down shift key on keyboard. Press run/stop button once. Release shift key. When monitor screen reads "Found", push Commodore key.

FOR ATARI

Loading Cassette

Pull the release lever above the keyboard towards you to open the cartridge door of the computer. If there are any cartridges in the slots, remove them and close the cartridge door.

Insert the program casssette into the cassette recorder with the label side up. Press the play button on the cassette recorder until it locks in the down position. Hold down the start button on your computer and turn on the power switch. After you hear a beep from your computer, press the return key. The program will load in about four to five minutes.

Should you have any difficulty loading the program, rewind the tape all the way to the beginning and try to reload as described above. If this fails, simply flip the cassette over and try loading the reverse side of the tape. The program has been recorded on both sides of the tape.

Loading Disk

Pull the release lever above the keyboard towards you to open the cartridge door. If there are any cartridges in the slots, remove them and close the cartridge door.

Turn on your disk drive and wait for the busy light to go out. Insert the Air Support program disk into the disk drive label side up with the section towards the rear of the disk drive. Close the disk drive door and turn on the power of your computer. The program will load in about 30 seconds.

INTRODUCTION

Please note that this manual is for both the ATARI and COMMODORE 64 (C-64) computers. Where the instructions differ for the ATARI and COMMODORE, COMMODORE instructions will appear in (parentheses).

You are in command of a chopper, and control both the blue army and the yellow (orange) special squad. The enemy controls the white (green) opposing army and in the ARCADE version also controls missile launchers and twirlers. Your goal is to destroy the enemy army of robots, their missile launchers and twirlers. Your chopper can drop bombs by pressing the trigger button. In addition, you can direct your robots in their ground assault through a wide variety of commands. Your robot army is organized into squads of sixteen robots each. You can control the entire army or each squad individually. See the "COMMANDS" section for the specific commands.

AIR SUPPORT has tremendous depth of play. Unlike some other computer games, a thorough reading and understanding of the instructions is necessary to play and enjoy AIR SUPPPORT at the higher difficulty levels. No two games will ever be played the same.

When a robot engages in combat with an enemy unit, it will begin to move its arms and legs very rapidly. Since the program determines your strength by scanning the 5 X 5 matrix around your robot in combat, the more robots you can bring in to support your fighting robot the greater your odds of defeating the enemy forces. NOTE: More about the specifics of this later. To win the game you must destroy enough enemy robots to outnumer the enemy 10 to 1. For enemy robot victory conditions, see the game subsection in the OPTION section of the instructions.

The game begins in the demonstration mode. Pressing the START (F7) button once will present the SCORE screen. Pressing the START (F7) button again will start the game. Pressing the OPTION (F1) button while the SCORE screen is showing will present you with the OPTION menu. To choose your desired option use OPTION (F1) to choose the option you wish to modify and the SELECT (F3) button to present the various choices of play.

Please read the ARCADE section in the OPTION screen section of these instructions, before playing AIR SUPPORT for the first time.

OPTION SCREEN

To get to the OPTION screen press the OPTION (F1) button while the SCORE screen is showing.

ARCADE

There are two choices of play, ARCADE and STRATEGY. In the ARCADE game in addition to the enemy robot army, there are enemy missile launchers that shoot interceptor missiles at your chopper. You have five choppers, each with a 30 bomb payload. You will receive an additional 10 bombs per minute as you continue to play. The missile launchers also deploy nasty ground-to-ground missiles against your robots on the average of one missile per missile launcher every minute. The ground shakes when the missiles detonate. The enemy receives missile launcher reinforcements at a rate determined by the difficulty level at which the game is played. You can destroy launchers either by dropping bombs on them or by moving your robots into their proximity.

The enemy also has deadly twirlers that are lethal to your robots. The twirlers destroy robots on contact, and so must be neutralized by bombing. Twirlers are reinforced in the same way as missile launchers.

In the STRATEGY game the enemy army consists of only robots. There are no missile launchers or twirlers. Also you have only one chopper with a payload of thirty bombs. You will not receive any additional bombs during the game.

In the ARCADE game quick reflexes are crucial. In the STRATEGY game there is more emphasis on long range game plan. A thorough understanding of all the command options is necessary in either case.

Before reading further, please play the ARCADE game by pressing the START (F7) button twice to begin the game. Don't worry about moving and directing your troops at this time, just try to destroy all of the enemy missile launchers, twirlers, and white (green) robots before all of your blue and yellow (orange) robots are destroyed by the enemy army and their ground-to-ground missiles.

Next read the STATUS section in this manual to understand the symbols that are used on the STATUS line.

After this, read the first half of the COMMANDS section and then play a few STRATEGY games. To change from ARCADE to STRATEGY, first get the OPTION screen and then using the OPTION (F1) button, proceed to the proper option line. Then press SELECT (F3) button to toggle the ARCADE selection to STRATEGY.

GAME

There are 7 possible games to play in AIR SUPPORT. In games 1 and 3 the enemy robots launch an all-out effort to get to the bottom of the map. In Game 1, all of your robots are between the enemy army and the bottom of the map. In Game 3, you have the enemy robots surrounded. The enemy will win if they get 10 robots near the bottom of the map (the last 3 lines of clear terrain).

In any game, when all of your robots are destroyed the game will end. In the ARCADE mode the game will end if all of your choppers are destroyed or there are no more of your robots on the ground. NOTE: You cannot protect your remaining robots by scooping them up in the chopper. You win the game by reducing the number of enemy robots until you outnumber them 10 to 1.

In **Game 2**, the enemy must hold the ground that it occupies.

In **Game 4**, the objective is to prevent your three command bases (towers with blue flags) from being overrun by enemy robots. These three bases are always separated from each other by about one and one half screens. To destroy a base, the enemy must get within 4 spaces (robots) of the flag at the base. Then after approximately 15 seconds, the base disappears. NOTE: The time for a base to disappear will be between 1 second and four minutes based on a random number generated by the computer. Unlike games 1 through 3 there are no enemy robots on the screen at the beginning of the game. Instead, they enter the map in groups of 32. The frequency of these groups appearing is determined by the difficulty option. The groups appear on the top, bottom, and left parts of the map. After entering the map they will head for one of the bases.

Game 5 is identical to Game 4 except that your 3 bases can be positioned anywhere in the middle two-thirds of the map.

Game 6 is like Game 4, but in this game the enemy starts in possession of the three bases. These bases must be captured and held until all of the enemy robots are destroyed. Your score will be reduced in direct proportion to the length of time the enemy controls the base. NOTE: See the scoring section. So, you must move quickly to secure these bases. Unlike games 4 and 5 these bases will not disappear but their color will change to indicate which army is in possession of the base.

Game 7 is similar to Game 6 with the exception that your 3 bases can be anywhere in the middle two-thirds of the map.

Enemy (250-999)

The number of enemy robots can vary from 250 to 999 in increments of 50. This number indicates the total number of robots in the enemy army, however, only 256 robots can appear on the map at any one time. The remaining robots will reinforce the original force of 256, as the original robots are destroyed.

Difficulty (Slow, Medium, Fast)

Look at the difficulty chart to see the differences among these three options.

Terrain (Light, Medium, Heavy)

This option controls the number of lakes, mountains, trees, etc., that are randomly generated on the map.

Airlift/Bombs

You may choose to play with either of these options on or off. The BOMBS option allows you to drop bombs on the enemy robots and installations. The AIRLIFT option allows you to use your chopper to pick up and drop your troops anywhere on the map. These options are meant to simulate different war conditions. You can simulate Civil War battles, World War battles or modern war conditions with very fast troop transport. These options are meant to be used primarily in the STRATEGY game, but also allow interesting handicaps for the player in the ARCADE version.

Robots (16-144)

This option determines how many squads of 16 robots will be in your army. Read the COMMANDS section to learn the commands to control each of the robot squads independently.

Status Line

The status line is located on the bottom of the screen when the game is in progress. It does not appear on the SCORE or OPTION screens.

Moving from left to right you will observe the following characters and numbers:

The first number is the squad # assigned to the yellow robots on the screen. You have direct control over the movement of this squad. If the number is blinking, then you have pressed the "0" [ZERO] key. Your commands will now be obeyed by the entire army.

The first letter is the combat level for the squad selected. This will be a letter from A - C.

The number after the hyphen is the number of robots in the selected squad.

The next symbol is the direction that the squad is responding to. This position of the STATUS line will show "H", "N", "G", "V", "v", "S", "s".

When your squad is retreating, then an "R" will appear after this.

When playing the ARCADE game, the number of choppers will precede the chopper symbol.

The number of chopper passengers appears after the chopper symbol.

Next the blue robot symbol appears. This is followed by the total number of blue robots remaining.

After the White (Green) robot symbol is the total number of robots left in the White (Green) opposing army.

After the bomb symbol is the total number of bombs left in your chopper's payload.

The last number in the STATUS line is elapsed time for the game.

COMMANDS

Basic Commands

The key and command designations are as follows:

"f" freezes the action of the game until the "f" key is pressed again.

Number keys [1-9] determine which blue squad is selected for command mode. For example, if the "2" key is pressed, the second squad color will change to yellow (orange). This means that you can commmand and airlift this squad. NOTE: All key commands apply only to the selected squad unless, of course, the "0"[zero] key has been pressed selecting the whole army response mode.

Arrow keys tell the selected squad to move in the direction of the arrow.

If your robots are in combat they will be unable to move or disengage from combat until their combat situation is resolved. The "u" and "r" keys are the only keys that units in combat will respond to.

"g" key tells the selected squad to go where the chopper was when the key was pressed and form a tight group around that location [g stands for group].

"s" key tells the selected squad to go where the copper was when the key was pressed and form a non-moving horizontal line in that location (s stands for straight line).

"u" key causes the chopper to pick up any of the selected squad (Yellow on ATARI or orange on COMMODORE) that are in a 7 X 7 matrix around the chopper's position. The chopper can hold a maximum of 16 robots.

"d" key causes the chopper to drop any robots that are aboard in a 4 X 5 matrix around the position of the chopper. The chopper can only drop robots onto empty territory, so if there are obstructions on the intended drop point, some robots will be left aboard the chopper. The number of robots remaining will be shown on the STATUS line.

"SPACE BAR" selects the next highest number squad.

"RETURN" selects the next lowest number squad.

"INSERT KEY" in the ARCADE game gives you a new chopper if there are any remaining. NOTE: You would use this when your chopper has used its payload of bombs.

Advance Commands

"OPL;" (OPL:) keys are the diagonal directional keys. "O" is up/left, "P" is up/right, "L" is down/left, ";" (:) is down/right.

"h" key tells the selected squad to go where the chopper was when the key was pressed, and form a moving horizontal line around that point (h stands for horizontal line).

"S" key (SHIFT-S) combines the "g" and the "s" commands. It allows you to form a concentrated horizontal line.

"v" key tells the selected squad to go where the chopper was when the key was pressed, and form a non-moving vertical line across that point ("v" stands for vertical line).

"V" (SHIFT-V) combines the "g" and the "v" commands. It allows you to form a concentrated vertical line.

"n" key tells the selected squad to stop moving (n stands for no movement).

"SHIFT-D" willl drop up to 4 robots from the chopper in a 1 row by 4 column line.

"CTRL-D" will drop up to 4 robots from the chopper in a 4 row by 1 column line.

"a, b, c" keys determine at what rate the selected squad combat is resolved.

"a" is the fastest resolution and the odds for the blue robot victory are reduced.

"b" should be the normal setting for combat. "b" is also used as the default for the strategy game.

"c" slows combat resolution even further. Thus, if you are outnumbered, you would probably want to use a "c" rate to "dig in" until you can bring in more robots. "c" is also used as the default setting for the ARCADE game.

"r" commands the selected squad to retreat. When you press the "r" key, the letter "R" will appear on the status line. Pressing "r" again turns off the retreat command. When the retreat command is activated, your selected squad will retreat in the direction you have indicated. NOTE: It may take a while before all of your robots can break off combat.

"0" [ZERO] key selects all squads to respond to your commands. If your press "0" again it will turn off this global command. When this command is activated, the squad number on the status line will blink.

DIFFICULTY CHART

	Slow	Medium	Fast
Number of missile launchers	10	20	30
Reinforcement rate/missile launchers	1	2	4
Number of Twirlers	10	20	30
Reinforcement rate/Twirlers	1	2	4
Missile Speed	normal	+ 50%	+ 100%
Reinforcement robots/minute Games 1-3	50	100	150
Reinforcement robots/minute Games 4-7	32	64	128

The ground-to-ground missile launch frequency for all levels of difficulty is 1 launch per minute.

Tactics

One of your robots is equal in strength to one and one-half enemy robots. When a robot is engaged in combat, its arms and legs will move very rapidly. Combat resolution is randomly timed. On the average of every 16 seconds, combat status and resolution will be scanned for each robot. The odds for each robot are determined by comparing the number of friendly and enemy robots in a 5 X 5 matrix around the friendly robot whose combat status is being resolved. The possible results are the destruction of either robot, or the combat is continued until the next scan.

Since combat is resolved in a 5 X 5 matrix, the more friendly robots you can bring to bear on a battle, the better your odds are of winning the battle. Therefore you maximize your odds by defending or attacking with three columns or rows of robots. One successful tactic is to hold the enemy with a thin line of your robots with combat resolution set to "C", while you roll up the enemy flank with the rest of your army.

Don't forget that you have a retreat function. It comes in handy when you need to break off combat. But don't wait too long or most of your robots will still be caught.

My favorite game is the STRATEGY game #6 with 700 + enemy robots and AIRLIFT and BOMBS turned off.

SCORING

The final score that is presented on the screen is computed as follows:

10 points for each enemy robot destroyed

20 points for each twirler destroyed

40 points for each launcher destroyed

2000 points for winning the arcade game

3000 points for winning a strategy game

For games 4 and 5, you will be awarded 1000 points for having two surviving bases and 3000 points for three surviving bases.

500 points for each surviving chopper in the ARCADE game.
Minus 10 points for each of your robots lost.

The amount of time taken to complete the game is subtracted from the total score as follows:

For games 1-5, the righthand digit of the time is made equal to zero, then this adjusted time figure is subtracted from the total gross score.

For games 6-7, the average of 60 points/minute/base that is enemy control, is subtracted from the total gross score.

We have presented this information so that you may track your strengths and weaknesses in playing AIR SUPPORT.

GOOD LUCK!

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